

## **"A Million To One, At Least"**

**By- Jim Martin**

"The time", summer of Sixty Seven. I didn't go to college, or have a high paid money job. I worked flat rate as a auto truck mechanic. But, we were doing okay. The first vacation I ever took in my life was a tent camping trip to St. Augustine, Florida. I had a '57 Ford, six cylinder station wagon with about a hundred thousand miles on it. Camping was \$2.50 a night and gas was about twenty eight cents a gallon. All we needed was food, money and maybe some sightseeing. We came to "camp, swim and fish!"

When we left Baltimore and headed south we had a total of \$100.00. I guess we had a lot of nerve at the time. I knew there wasn't anything that could happen to the car that I couldn't handle. My wife, Marge, my two daughters, Sharon and Lorraine, and my two boys, Jimmy and Buddy, were heading to Florida. Sharon was 17, Lorraine 14, Jimmy 12 and Buddy was 10. I was 42 and Marge was 40.

The girls were my original "Fishing Buddies", but as the boys came along the girls sort of got away from it and the boys took over. But today, the girls fish more than ever. Me and the boys have fished for Bass and Crappie and fished winter, summer and even a lot of ice fishing. But on this trip being 10 and 12 we were fishing between the "party" charter boats at the docks at St. Augustine catching some Perch and Spot. We watched people coming and going out at different times with their catch. I knew a trip out on one of those boats was out of the question for us.

As we fished, I could hear this "clicking" noise coming from this big boat next to us and it sounded familiar to me. I watched the guy and he was hooking up a battery charger. I knew he was on the wrong track, but I didn't want to butt in. By hearing the loud clack, I knew the batteries were okay. He was shaking his head and I knew he had run out of aces. I said, do you mind if I take a look at it. He said do you know anything about diesel engines? If I was on the highway and someone was broke down, I could usually always get them going. I know "a little bit" about everything. I told him I didn't think he had an engine problem because the engine wasn't turning over. I told the boys to keep fishing and to be careful. I climbed on the boat and he already had the floor to the bilge open. He said he had five "Business Men" from New York going out early the next morning and he had to be sure it would start. Anyway, I climbed down into the bilge and finally found the starter. It was as big as a loaf of bread and a little longer. It weighed about sixty five pounds. I told him to go up and hit the starter button. He did that and I heard what I wanted to hear. I asked him for a hammer and he looked surprised. Anyway, he handed me one, and I told him to hold the key on start. He did that and at the same time I hit the starter with the hammer and the big diesel engine started. I told him it might start in the morning because I had him start it up a few more times, but to be sure, it needed a new starter. Not wanting to take a chance, he asked me if I could take the starter off so he could buy a new one. I said, hand me some wrenches. I got it up to him and he took off for somewhere and came back in about an hour with a new one. I climbed back down and he got it to me. It was heavy but I finally got it in and bolted up. I hooked up the battery cable and he climbed up to the bridge. He was smiling and he had his fingers crossed. I said, "contact" and he hit the starter and it immediately

started. He was so excited, he couldn't stand it. He gave me some stuff to clean up with and we put the floor back together.

Throughout life, I always used this system when I helped somebody out. When they say, "what can I pay you?", I always say, nothing, I'm glad I could help. He wouldn't take no for an answer though. He said after supper he would take me and the boys out about five miles and we would probably catch some dolphins. About six o'clock we met him at the boat with our little fishing rods and he said to put them back in the car, we won't need them. We got out about five miles and he gave us some rods and reels that looked like something you could "winch a car" out of a ditch with. We were trolling along and the Captain was up in the flying bridge. Jimmy was "being Jimmy" and not watching his rod and Buddy and I were holding our rods on the other side of the boat. I heard something that "haunts me to this day", Jimmy said his rod went overboard. I was devastated. I looked up to the captain and he was still looking where he was going as there were other boats close by. While I was with Jimmy trying to do something, I didn't know what, Buddy yelled "got 'em." He was strapped in his seat and he was cranking and I couldn't help him, I was trying to do something and I was watching the captain. There was no way I had enough money to replace one of those rod and reels. I told Bud to keep fighting, as I had already reeled mine in and put it in the holder. We weren't crying, but me and Jimmy were "sick." I was watching Buddy and after about ten or fifteen minutes we could see the leader and the hook at the surface, but no big fish. He wound the hook up and I saw something I didn't believe. Another hook was hooked to his hook. I started pulling the line in, hand over hand. After about fifty yards I saw this rod and reel come to the surface. We were five miles out in the ocean, in about fifty feet of water and Buddy's hook, caught Jimmy's hook. Without the Captain knowing it we finally got all the mono filament back on Jimmy's reel.

The Captain never knew it and we ended up catching Dolphins. If I hadn't been there, I wouldn't have believed it! This isn't one of those made up things that people dream about. This actually happened, a true story.

P.S., The boys were fishing about eight feet apart, "About a Million to One, At Least"

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jimmy M." with a stylized flourish underneath.